PESNA (FESTUS)

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Festus (Lindsay 222,25 and 228,10) claimed that the ancients said *pesna* for *penna*. One can never demonstrate that a linguistic form never occurred. One can only (a) show that such a form is highly improbable at least in the rôle being claimed, or (b) clarify how in popular usage (which might equally apply anachronistically to that of the reporter) such an unexpected form could have arisen. In other words, in case (a) we call upon the known rules of the language that would exclude the form in question; in case (b) we predict in retrospect a rule change or rule application that, contrary to known outcomes, would have yielded such an additional outcome.

Niedermann (*Phonétique historique*, 1945, 191—2, footnote) has remarked on the main substantive phonetic considerations : *pesna* would have led to **pēna* and hence cannot be the ancestor of *penna* [1]. "Si donc *pesna* n'est pas un faux archaïsme" there must have existed doublets **pet-nā* and **pet-snā*. Then **pet-nā* would have forced the other out. Niedermann adds the morphological conjecture that **pet-nā* would be related to **pet-snā* as *rāllum* (1 × Pliny *Nat. Hist.* XVIII 179) < **rād-lom* was to *caelum* 'chisel' < **caid-slom*. But this latter pair would be a different matter since it is rather a question of the complicated competing forms (*scāla* etc.) for terms for instruments involving suffixes in *-l-*, where forms in **-s-* would have naturally arisen in combinations of roots in final dental with the suffix **-tlo-*.

Benveniste (*Origines* 101), in discussing Skt. *kṛtsná-* (: κράτος), *tīkṣna-* (: *téjas- tigra-*), Lat. *arānea* (: ἀράχνη), *cēna*, accepted the reconstruction **pet-snā* "malgré la difficulté phonétique." As we have seen, it simply cannot be accepted on phonetic grounds. Furthermore, as an early formation there are morphological difficulties. In that section of his book Benveniste discusses very sensitively the suffix **-ser*/*-sen*,

[1] Sommer (*Handbuch*, 254, § 142) cannot be correct : *penna* aus * *pet-s-nā* (πέτομαι) wegen *pesnas*. For the clear *cēna* < **kert-snā* (OLat. *cesna*, Osc. *kerssnais* ; Sommer 260) runs counter to this.

StCl, XV, 1973, p. 151 — 152, Bucureşti.

which gives Hittite *-šar/šnaš* (100) and in fossilized form the infinitive endings of Skt. *-sani* and Greek -εεν > -ειν (102). Thus a formation **pet-snā* should have meant something on the order of 'the act of flying, something that results from flying, a flight or instance of flying, etc.'. This is not to say that no such formation existed. Rather, if it did (and if Festus's form has any proper claim to antiquity), there was no close or parallel relation, other than chance phonetic similarity, to **pet-nā*; they were certainly not what may be called doublets. In short, if **pet-snā* actually occurred, it was a specialized and derived descendant of a verbal (action) noun terminating (as I would write it) in **-sr̥/sn-* (locative sg. **-sen*, **-sen-i*).

However, it seems to me perfectly clear that **pet-nā* must be a totally different formation.The IE dialects give us abundant evidence, which is well known, of an old heteroclite which I would reconstruct as **petr̥/ptn-os* (genitive sg.) etc. The Germanic forms represented by Eng. *feather* attest to **petr̥*; as I have argued elsewhere[2], Welsh *adar* 'birds', *adain* 'wing' (**atanī* = **(p)atan-iH$_a$*) OBret. *atanocion* gl. *alligeris* (**atan-āk-* + plural) attest to both the *-r* ending and the zero-grade **pt-*. OIr. *én*, Welsh *edn*, OBret. *etn* Mid. Bret. *ezn*, OCorn. *hethen* 'bird' show a levelling of the other vocalism, **(p)etn-*. These last Celtic forms are exactly equatable with Lat. *penna* in stem formation and generalization. Moreover, the stem termination and gender of *penna* are just what we would expect for Latin.

I have argued elsewhere that *unda* is the regular reflex of the old morphological plural (collective) **udnā* of 'water' (**u̯odr̥*); in an article appearing in Glotta[3] I have attempted to show that similarly *lacrima* is a regular outcome of the morphologically parallel **dlacruma* < **drakrunā*. That is, from these old heteroclites, when the collective becomes specialized and wins out, we expect an old neuter plural in **-ā* made from the *n*-state of the stem. Hence **petn-ā* or **pet-n-ā*. The phonology is perfect; the morphology expected; the semantics transparent and well paralleled both in Latin and in the cognate dialects.

There can therefore be no doubt that **pet-n-ā* existed. If **pet-sn-ā* really existed it had nothing immediately to do with **pet-n-ā*. If Festus's *pesna* was real and reflects a (purely phonetic) crossing or approximation of these two forms, it was a happening of recent date in the history of Latin, and cannot reflect an archaic survival. It must then have been motivated by the existence of other suffixes with and without *s* that had arisen through dental combinations. Certainly neither *pesna* nor **pet-sn-ā* should be used to prove anything about the history of Indo-European.

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[2] *Evidence for Laryngeals* (1965) 224ff.; *Annales de Bretagne* (forthcoming).
[3] Glotta 50, 1972, 291—299.